Expert panel on Bird Flu

2899. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up an expert panel to find out the causes leading to the recent incidences of Bird Flu in the country to safeguard the interest of trade in Agriculture and agro-based industries that suffered losses due to banning of chicken and farm exports;

(b) whether ICMR has also set up four Bio-safety Level-3 (BSL 3) laboratories to tackle outbreak of avian flu with foreign know-how, funds and consultancy from USA for the project; and

(c) if so, the other steps being taken to meet the situation in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) Yes, Madam. A committee has been constituted to assess/determine the possible source of infection of the outbreak of Avian Influenza in poultry in Navapur, Nandurbar District of Maharashtra under the Chairmanship of Dr. N.K. Ganguly, Driector General , Indian Council of Medical Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

(b) and (c) Three Bio Safety level-3 laboratories would be established in the country to tackle outbreak of new emerging diseases such as Avian Flu. They will be located at (1) National Institute of Communicable Diseases, Delhi (Directorate General of Health Services), (2) National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases, Kolkata and (3) Tuberculosis Research Centre, Chennai (Indian Council of Medical Research). One BSL-3 laboratroy is already functioning at the ICMR's Microbial Containment Complex, Pune.

The laboratories will start functioning shortly as they are going to be constructed using pre-fabricated materials. The expenditure is being met from the Government of India funds.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have taken adequate measures to contain the human cases of Avian Influenza, if it is to happen. Chief Secretaries of all the States/UTs have been requested to keep a close watch on fatality among bird population and appearance of sever respiratory illness in the exposed human population. A contingency plan to manage human caes of Avian Infulenza was prepared and circulated to the States. A task force constituted to ensure availability of drugs and vaccines have decided to procure Tamiflu and personal protective equipment. 1 million capsules of Tamiflu and 10,000 personal protective equipments were stockpiled.